

CASEY QUILTS C.I.A.; HIS DEPUTY NAMED TO TAKE HIS PLACE

CONFIRMATION SEEN

Nominee Would Be First
Career Officer at Top
of Agency Since '76

By GERALD M. BOYD

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 2 — President Reagan today accepted the resignation of William L. Casey as Director of Central Intelligence and nominated the agency's deputy director, Robert M. Gates, a career officer, to succeed him.

White House officials said the resignation had been voluntary and had been initiated by Mr. Casey, who is recovering from the removal of a cancerous brain tumor. Mr. Gates has been the acting Director of Central Intelligence since Mr. Casey entered the hospital in December.

White House officials said Mr. Casey's resignation was effective Jan. 29, the day it was tendered.

Confirmation Is Predicted

White House and Congressional officials said the nomination of Mr. Gates, who joined the Central Intelligence Agency as an analyst in 1966, would insure continuity and would avoid a confirmation battle on Capitol Hill. Republican and Democratic leaders on the Senate Intelligence Committee predicted confirmation.

Mr. Gates is the first career officer to head the agency since January 1976, when William E. Colby left office after President Ford asked for his resignation. By contrast, Mr. Casey had established his close ties to President Reagan by serving as his national campaign manager in 1980.

Close to the President

Officials said that Mr. Casey's departure would enable the agency to make a new start at a time when it is under criticism from some members of Congress for its role in the Iran affair and in other covert operations that have not been fully reported to Congressional committees.

While Mr. Casey's close relationship to the President was widely regarded as an asset for achieving Presidential backing for agency goals, his relationship with some other top Administration officials has been viewed as a liability. For example, he has clashed with several key Reagan aides, including Treasury Secretary James A. Baker 3d and Secretary of State George P. Shultz.

After Mr. Casey's operation and criticism from Capitol Hill of his testimony on the Iran affair, the President had vowed not to seek his ouster. Because of that, Mr. Reagan's decision to accept the resignation was an indication that the former director faces a long recuperation and would not have been able to return to his post.

After Mr. Casey was hospitalized, it was disclosed that he had also been treated for prostate cancer.

Mr. Reagan offered Mr. Casey the vacant position of Presidential counselor, although it was uncertain if he would be able to fill the post.

"It was Mr. Casey's decision to resign," said Marlin Fitzwater, the White House spokesman, who announced that Mr. Reagan was accepting the resignation with "reluctance and deep regret."

"He saw that it would be some time before he would be able to return to duty and undertake full activities at the C.I.A.," Mr. Fitzwater said. "He realized the need for on-the-job leadership in the intelligence community."

A senior White House official, who asked not to be identified, said Mr. Gates had been one of two people seriously considered as Mr. Casey's successor. The other, Howard H. Baker Jr., the former Senate Republican leader, had told White House officials privately that he was not interested, officials have said.

White House officials said Mr. Reagan's deliberations on a successor had focused on whether to appoint a professional in the intelligence community or an outsider who lacked an intelligence background.

"It basically could have gone two ways: Somebody who brought expertise or someone who is not an expert, but who has other strengths, such as a Howard Baker," one senior aide said.

Senator Patrick J. Leahy, Democrat of Vermont and a member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, said the appointment of Mr. Gates was the only way the Administration could have avoided a "long, drawn out and contentious" confirmation hearing.

Similarly, Senator David L. Boren, Democrat of Oklahoma and the chairman of the intelligence committee, said he has had a good relationship with Mr. Gates.

Relationship of Candor Sought

"I think he realizes it's extremely important for us to build a relationship of candor and mutual trust between the agency and the oversight committees," he said.

But other officials, who have been involved in shepherding top Reagan appointees through the confirmation process, said Mr. Gates could have problems because of the Iran disclosures. During the hearings of the Senate intelligence committee in December, some members questioned whether Mr. Gates was telling Congress all he knew about the circumstances under which he and Mr. Casey learned about the diversion of profits from the sale of arms to Iran to Nicaraguan insurgents.



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Robert M. Gates, nominated as Director of Central Intelligence. Man in the News,